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Evaluation of the accessibility of structured exercise programs for pregnant women: An analysis of offerings at the YMCAs of Massachusetts

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EVALUATION OF THE ACCESSIBILITY OF STRUCTURED EXERCISE PROGRAMS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN:
AN ANALYSIS OF OFFERINGS AT THE YMCAS OF MASSACHUSETTS



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BACKGROUND

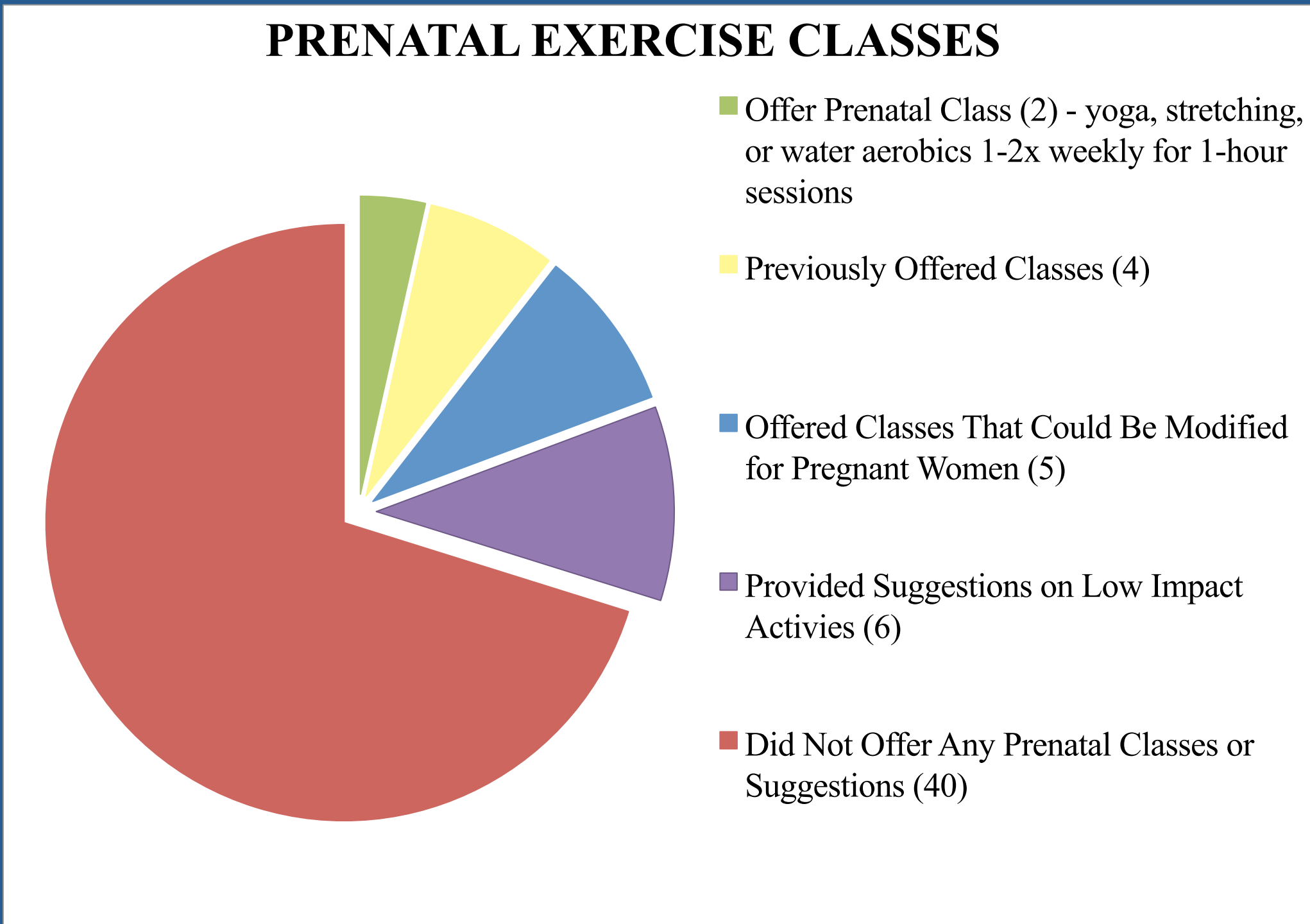
The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that exercise be encouraged in women with uncomplicated pregnancies (ACOG Committee Opinion, 2015). The benefits of exercise in pregnancy include a decreased incidence of medical complications related to pregnancy including gestational diabetes, preterm labor, and gestational hypertensive disorders. In addition, it has been shown that exercise decreases the incidence of excessive maternal weight gain, cesarean section rates, and low birth weight of the newborn.

PROFILE OF ANNUAL MASSACHUSETTS BIRTHS (2015)

7.8% born low birth weight, 8.7% born preterm, 4.7% rate of maternal gestational diabetes, and 27%-35% rate of C-section, varying by county.

METHODS

- A telephone survey was conducted to gather information about exercise programs available to pregnant women at YMCAs across Massachusetts.
- The YMCA was chosen because of its accessibility to the general public and its history of affordable exercise options.
- Contact information for the YMCAs was obtained using information from national and local YMCA websites.
- A representative from each YMCA was contacted regarding available options for pregnant women, if any exercise options offered were targeted to pregnant women, reasons for not offering prenatal-focused classes, and other resources for pregnant women made available during a class such as childcare and affordability.



RESULTS

- A total of 59 YMCA's from Massachusetts were included in the study; 2 of these were satellite locations.
- Our analysis revealed that only 3% (2/59) of Massachusetts YMCA facilities currently provide a specific class for prenatal exercise: prenatal yoga and a stretching class.
- 4 facilities indicated that they had offered pregnancy specific classes in the past but did not currently offer them.
- 6 facilities did not offer classes but recommended low impact exercises such as stretching, water aerobics or yoga.
- 5 facilities provided classes which could be adapted for pregnant women.
- 54 facilities offered onsite childcare with membership (ages newborn to 14 years).

CONCLUSIONS

- This study revealed that options for exercise specifically tailored to pregnant women are currently limited at the YMCA.
- While this evaluation was specific to YMCA facilities, these results may reflect an overall limitation of exercise options for pregnant women.

RESEARCH PLAN

- Existing data is limited regarding reasons for non-uptake of exercise such as personal preferences, conflicting advice, lack of access, or any barriers women face when attempting to access exercise during the pregnancy.
- Further research, via a prospective cohort study is currently underway to evaluate the perspectives of pregnant and recently postpartum patients' knowledge of exercise during pregnancy and any potentially perceived barriers to participating in exercise during pregnancy.
- Our hope is that these surveys will provide useful insight into how community organizations, such as the YMCA, can partner in the goal to facilitate access to exercise during pregnancy and its associated health benefits.

REFERENCES

- ACOG Committee Opinion, 2015.
- Exercise in Pregnancy! by V. Beghella and G. Saccone (AJOG Feb 2017; Epub).
- Massachusetts Births, 2015 <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/vital-records/birth-report-2015.pdf>
- March of Dimes Peristats, Massachusetts <http://www.marchofdimes.org/Peristats>
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